

Case Study: Pennsylvania's Changing Workforce: Planning Today with Tomorrow's Vision

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The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's has more than 12.2 million citizens, placing it among the eight most populous states. The number of state full-time salaried employees under the Governor's jurisdiction consists of 75,623 as of July 1, 2004, and 321 salaried part-time and more than 4,800 wage part-time employees. The average age of the full-time permanent salaried workforce is 45 years, with an average length of service of 13 years. Seventy percent of state workers are covered by a merit system, and 83 percent are represented by one of 20 authorized unions. State workers under the Governor's jurisdiction work in 34 primary agencies and scores of smaller boards and commissions. Recent workforce-related awards include the National Association of State Personnel Executives (NASPE); Eugene H. Rooney, Jr. Program Award of Merit for the Human Resource Management Trainee Program (August 2000); and the National Association of Chief Administrators 2001 Outstanding Program Award for Creative Excellence in Human Resources for Pennsylvania Information Technology Retention and Recruitment.

Workforce planning has become a topic of heightened interest as the baby boomer generation edges towards retirement, making workforce and replacement strategies necessary. This manuscript defines workforce planning and indicates reasons for its importance. It also outlines the environment and challenges the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania faces, as it implements various workforce planning initiatives. The framework and methodology used in Pennsylvania are outlined, as well as significant milestones achieved and lessons learned throughout the process. Pennsylvania has formulated a number of short- and long-term strategies, and this manuscript provides information on each of them. Pennsylvania's approach is designed to maintain a workforce capable of meeting the evolving operational and staffing needs of the Commonwealth. The approach recognizes and requires focused resources for critical areas, top-level endorsement and collaborative efforts among stakeholders for effective decision-making, broad application and technological utilization for the implementation of reliable workforce plans.

"Did you hear the news?"

"What news?"

"After working for the Commonwealth for more than 30 years, John, Bill and Sue have announced their plans to retire."

"You're joking, right?"

"No."

"We are really going to miss them. Not only have they been here for so many years, but they have also assisted in successfully transitioning through several changes in administration. They have such a wealth of knowledge about the agency and operational activities."

"How will we function without them? Who will be left in the office? Who will be their successors, and what will be done to ensure a seamless transition of future employees into the workplace?"

These are just a few of the questions that are being asked as Commonwealth agencies address challenges resulting from the changing demographics of Pennsylvania's workforce.

This manuscript defines workforce planning and indicates reasons for its importance. It also outlines the environment and challenges the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania faces, as it implements various workforce planning initiatives. The framework and methodology used in Pennsylvania are outlined, as well as significant milestones achieved and lessons learned throughout the process. Pennsylvania has formulated a number of short and long-term strategies, and this manuscript provides information on each of them. The remaining intent of the article is to accentuate the deliberate action taken in planning today with tomorrow's vision.

What Is Workforce Planning?

Workforce planning is the "strategic alignment of an organization's human capital with its business direction. It is a methodical process of analyzing the current workforce, determining future workforce needs, identifying the gap between the present and future, and implementing solutions so the organization can accomplish its mission, goals and objectives."¹ More simply stated, in Pennsylvania state government, it is known as the process of having "the right number of people with the right job knowledge, diversity and skills working in the right jobs at the right time."²

Why is Workforce Planning Important?

Labor force projections have significant implications for workforce planners. While the labor pool and general population are aging, people are working longer, living longer and enjoying much healthier lives. In Pennsylvania state government, the average age of employees is 46 years old.³ Conversely, the birthrate is at an historic low. "The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that while the youngest workers (ages 16 to 24 years old) are increasing by 15 percent, this decade will also witness the 25 to 34-year-old baby boomers' children entrance into the workforce at just half that rate. The

employable workforce population between 35 and 44 years of age is actually declining, as the overall national rate of workforce growth faces a sharp drop. After peaking at nearly 30 percent in the 1970s (as the baby boomers as well as unprecedented numbers of women entered the workforce), and holding relatively steady at 12 percent during the 1990s and again in the present decade, the rate is projected to drop and level off at 2 percent to 3 percent per decade thereafter. This translates into an annual growth rate of less than 1 percent today and an anemic .2 percent by 2020.”⁴

This information is critical to know as it reveals not only a shortage of available workers but also a significant loss of institutional knowledge and expertise as the more seasoned and experienced workers ultimately retire. It is imperative for organizations to take the steps necessary to address the upcoming challenges before this occurs.

Pennsylvania's Workforce Planning Challenges

According to the 2004 Governor's Annual Work Force Report, Pennsylvania state government employs slightly more than 80,000 filled salaried and wage employees under the Governor's jurisdiction.⁵ Pennsylvania's current population translates into a customer base of approximately 12.2 million citizens. According to the Department of Labor and Industry, Pennsylvania's population is expected to grow by 1.3 percent between the years 2000 and 2010 and exceed 12.4 million.⁶

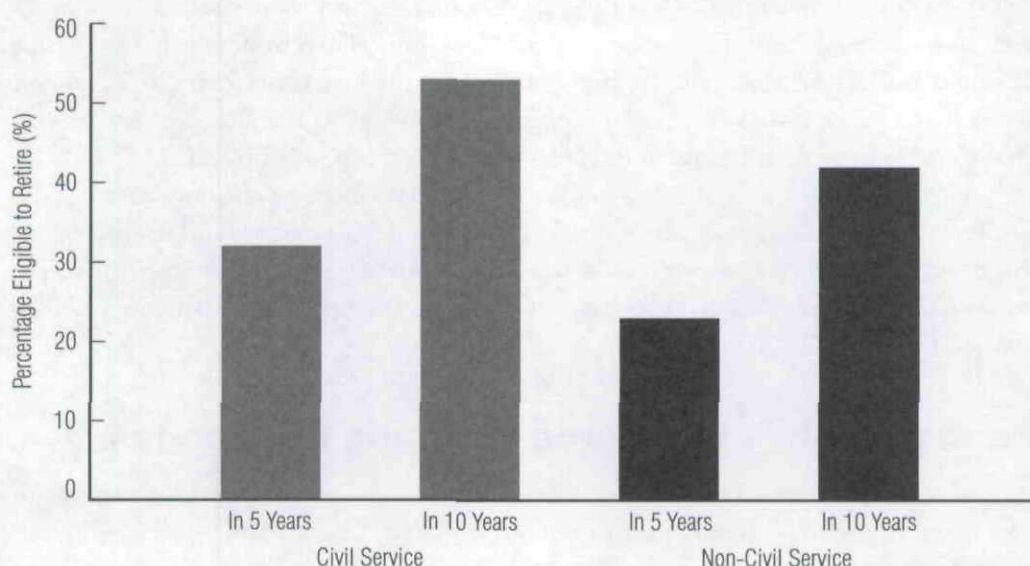
When categorizing the workforce, over two-thirds — 69 percent — of the Commonwealth's workforce is merit system covered. From the public sector perspective of this state government, almost one-third — 32 percent — of its classified service, full-time workforce will become eligible to retire within the next five years. Projecting even further, more than half — 53 percent — of merit system covered, full-time employees will become eligible to retire within the next 10 years.

The remaining one-third — 31 percent — of the workforce is non-civil service. For this group of employees, the overall projections are slightly less with 23 percent of non-civil service employees becoming eligible to retire within five years, and 42 percent becoming eligible within 10 years (see **Figure 1**).

In addition to the large majority of the Commonwealth workforce being merit-covered, the workforce is also highly unionized. Eighty-three percent of the total full-time, salaried workforce is covered by one of 21 labor unions representing various state employees. Approximately 23 percent of the total unionized workforce is projected to retire within five years and 39 percent within 10 years.

Mere knowledge of the statistics presented in this section is not enough to address workforce planning needs. Action upon the potential challenges revealed is needed, and within Pennsylvania state government, action has been taken. Agencies have been given explicit direction to review their organizational structures and flatten layers, streamline processes, eliminate one-on-one reporting relationships and consolidate operations where possible. They have been asked to reevaluate the manner in which work was done in the past and to explore new approaches that will generate more effective and efficient ways of getting the job done.

Figure 1. Statewide Retirement Eligibility as of July 2004



Pennsylvania's Workforce Planning Framework

Regardless of the instrument or model used, any workforce planning approach must be flexible and visionary in order to prepare for changing needs and produce meaningful solutions. Most models that have been developed to depict an organization's workforce planning framework consist of four key factors:

1. Need — comparison of the current environment with future organizational plans and designs;
2. Approach — planning for controlled and uncontrolled events that may affect the organization's workforce;
3. Implementation — putting the plan into action;
4. Evaluation — assessing the results for the purpose of determining success and further action needed.

Upon assessment, if it is determined that the results do not address the need, then the process should be revisited and the plan and action steps should be revised accordingly.

Pennsylvania's Workforce Planning Model, as referenced in **Figure 2**, consists of the following nine steps:

1. Analyze agency mission, goals and initiatives;
2. Determine future work requirements;

3. Analyze current resources and projections;
4. Perform high-level workforce gap analysis;
5. Develop proposed organizational plan;
6. Perform detailed skill gap analysis;
7. Create workforce solution action plan;
8. Implement workforce solution action plans;
9. Measure workforce planning results and recommend improvements.

Figure 2. Pennsylvania Workforce Planning Model



A description of each of these steps is detailed in **Table 1**, the Nine-Step Workforce Planning Methodology.

Table 1. Nine-Step Workforce Planning Methodology**STEP 1****Analyze agency mission, goals, & initiatives**

Obtain executive management support, and inform unions if applicable.

Identify the critical drivers that initiate workforce planning cycles, i.e., retirement trends and other turnover projections, legislative and policy changes, program initiatives, direction of the agency head and executive staff, strategic plan, federal and Governor's budget allocations for positions, Governor's goals (PPGs), Agency Program Revision Requests (PRRs), and richness of Civil Service and non-Civil Service lists that reflect the diversity of the internal and external labor market.

STEP 2**Determine future work requirements**

Identify the required job knowledge and skills that would be needed to accomplish the organizational unit's portion of the agency's mission, goals, and initiatives.

Identify the number of employees that will be needed to meet future business needs.

Assess the workforce by occupation, function, age and length of service distribution, diversity and ethnicity, skills, short- and long-term competencies, supervisory ratio, geographic area, and analyze entrance and exit information.

Identify job classifications and Civil Service and non-Civil Service positions needed.

Create new positions; develop, recruit, and populate Civil Service and non-Civil Service lists; and revise job classifications as needed.

Create job descriptions and performance standards as appropriate.

STEP 3**Analyze the current resources and projections**

Identify vacancies.

Identify vacancies that will not be filled.

Identify positions that are no longer needed and can be eliminated.

Identify skills and short- and long-term competencies in the current organization.

Identify non-core skills attached to a position or person.

Assess the workload and determine if and how it can be restructured to utilize available staff.

Assess the need for adding wage positions, hiring annuitants for a limited term, and outsourcing or redeployment of staff.

Continuously assess the work environment for indicators of change and the need to realign workforce planning efforts to meet organizational goals and a demographically changing workforce.

STEP 4**Produce high-level Workforce Gap Analysis**

Calculate the Gap between the projected need (Step 2, future work requirements) and the projected supply (Step 3, current resources).

Identify areas where future needs exceed the current resources and projections.

Identify areas where the current workforce exceeds the projected needs of the future.

Identify areas where the current supply will meet the future needs, resulting in a gap of zero.

Once gaps are identified, consult with management to prioritize the significant gaps that will have the most impact on organizational goals.

Table 1. Nine-Step Workforce Planning Methodology (continued)**STEP 5****Develop proposed organizational plan**

Determine funding and budget required to support the proposed organization while capitalizing on key budgetary cycle dates.

Assess existing skills and short-and long-term competencies in the organization, workforce demographics, political climate, and economic market trends.

Define the organizational restructure and reallocation/addition of positions as needed (reporting relationships, classifications, functions).

STEP 6**Perform detailed skill gap analyses**

Identify existing employee skills/qualifications/short-and long-term competencies required for the proposed organization.

Identify career planning and development programs designed to increase women and minority representation in upper management jobs.

Identify required job knowledge and skills needed for the new organization/position(s).

Perform skill gap analysis of employees' existing skills and those needed in the new work environment.

Perform skill gap analysis between current organizational skills and the skills required to function in the planned environment.

STEP 7**Create Workforce solution action plans**

Using the results from step 6, determine the high-level components to be included in the workforce plan. Create recruitment, development, retention, and outsourcing strategies, and organizational changes.

STEP 8**Implement Workforce solution action plans**

Secure executive support for the workforce plan.

Complete the details of the workforce plan including specific components, steps, and organizational changes to accomplish the mission, goal, or initiative.

Communicate and develop consensus on workforce plan strategies with organizational heads, human resources, program managers and supervisors.

Implement the plan.

STEP 9**Measure Workforce Planning Results and Recommend Improvements**

Determine measurements for success.

Run reports and analyze results of workforce planning components.

Obtain feedback from program managers and supervisors.

Analyze employee performance and developmental needs.

Continuously review the organizational budget to determine existing and projected fiscal resources.

Assess recruitment activities based on cycle times.

Continuously assess the work environment for indicators of change and the need to realign workforce planning efforts.

Revise workforce planning initiatives regularly to ensure strategies are in line with agency mission, goals, and initiatives, and strategic plan and vision.

Adjust workforce planning efforts and performance measures as needed according to evolving strategic planning efforts.

Significant Milestones Achieved

In 1996, Pennsylvania state government began placing greater emphasis on workforce planning. See **Figure 3** for a timeline depicting significant milestones achieved.

Figure 3. Significant Accomplishments

1996 — Identification of occupations at risk for high turnover in response to extended retirement incentive, and development of the Personnel Analysts Trainee Program (now called Human Resource Management Trainee Program).

Fall 1996 — Furlough mitigation of employees at Commonwealth Data Centers.

July 1998 — First Human Resource Management Trainee Class hired.

September 1999 — Initiated seven-phase workforce planning initiative.

Spring 2001 — Pennsylvania Management Associate Team Project yielded a modified WFP model with nine steps, as well as new resources, tools, and step-by-step instructions.

Spring 2001 — WFP Web site developed, encouraging decentralization of the WFP effort.

Spring 2001 — Developed nursing recruitment Web site and materials in response to statewide shortage of healthcare professionals.

August 2002 — WFP Retirement Projection Tool developed and distributed for agency use.

October 2002 — Workforce reporting survey distributed to agencies for decentralized identification of problem areas.

Fall 2002 — PA State Civil Service Commission implemented the Integrated Computerized Examination (ICE) System, offering online applications and electronic civil service examinations.

June 2003 — Worked with the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole to develop a replacement strategy for a high-projected turnover of parole agents and supervisors.

January 2004 — Formation of the Bureau of Workforce Planning and Development in the Governor's Office of Administration.

May 2004 — Modified existing WFP Retirement Projection Tool for use with the new Integrated Enterprise System (IES).

July 2004 — Utilized annuitants creatively in response to mass retirements in June.

Following is a brief summary of several of the more significant accomplishments:

Publication of Governor's Annual Work Force Report

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania maintained historical state agency complement data as early as 1928 and issued its first formal workforce report in 1973. For more than 30 years, the Governor's Annual Work Force Report has provided and continues to provide key statistics and analysis to Commonwealth managers and the public. As stated previously, demographics alone, however, are not enough for meaningful and effective workforce planning.

Identification of Occupations at Risk for High Turnover and Development of the Human Resource Management Trainee Program

In 1996, prompted by an extended retirement incentive offered to state employees, occupations at risk for high turnover or difficulty in filling were identified. The study also specifically reviewed jobs in accounting, budget, information technology and institutional business management. The most significant finding was that 40 percent of human resource management staff in state government would be eligible for full retirement within the next five years. A concerted effort by the Governor's Office of Administration, the State Civil Service Commission, and selected agencies resulted in the development of the Personnel Analyst Trainee program [now known as the Human Resource Management Trainee (HRMT) program]. The HR leadership in Pennsylvania state government considers this to be one of the most successful Commonwealth workforce planning initiatives. The HRMT program is designed to attract, train, and rapidly develop exceptional candidates for key human resource management jobs. Program entry is highly competitive and includes an intense, highly structured one-year combination of classroom and on-the-job training.

Furlough Mitigation of Employees at Commonwealth Data Centers

Another successful program as a result of effective workforce planning was the furlough mitigation of staff at Commonwealth data centers. While the impact of the retirement legislation at that time was greatest on human resource jobs, additional workforce planning studies were conducted during the reengineering of the Commonwealth's data processing systems. These studies revealed current and potential occupational and skill gaps. In response, Pennsylvania decided to consolidate and outsource its mainframe computer operations and adopt distributed systems technologies, leaving many mainframe employees in jeopardy of losing their jobs. Collaborative strategies between management and the union were implemented, resulting in retention initiatives targeted at retraining affected employees to perform new duties created by emerging technology. An information technology program was created and information technology classes were successfully restructured. Of approximately 300 employees facing furlough from their computer mainframe jobs, all were provided opportunities for retraining and subsequent placement in other information technology jobs, saving millions of dollars in lost resources and unemployment compensation costs. The retooling of these employees contributed to a loyal workforce that was already familiar with the work environment. Priority hiring was given to the retrained employees with many not only retaining jobs but receiving promotions as well. The program not only provided for outsourcing and avoided layoffs, but it also prepared existing staff for the new generation of information technology jobs.

Development of Workforce Planning Model

In 1999, a workforce planning initiative comprised the following seven phases:

1. Assessment of all Commonwealth classifications.
2. Organization of related classifications into occupational groups.

3. Identification of occupations at risk for significant turnover with two sub-phases:
 - a. based on age and length of service,
 - b. based on occupational change due to technological impact and program or class restructure, recruitment difficulties due to insufficient Civil Service lists and hard-to-fill jobs, retention challenges, and natural turnover based on past and projected separations.
4. Recommendations for corrective action.
5. Development of a specific plan for addressing problem areas.
6. Implementation of recommendations.
7. Evaluation of the plan and corrective actions.

Early work on the project identified the 100 most populated classes based on statistical data in the Governor's Annual Work Force Report. Of those 100 classes, 25 occupational groups were established. An age and length-of-service matrix was developed for each occupational group, separating those occupations at risk into high, moderate and low probability for current or potential retirement within the next three years. The retirement projections were based on the expectation of the passage of the pending 30-year early retirement window that legislation would make available to Commonwealth employees under the Governor's jurisdiction for at least three years, beginning July 1, 2000.

Development of Workforce and Succession Planning Web Site (www.workforceplanning.state.pa.us)

In order to manage the ever-increasing number of employees becoming eligible to retire each year, it became necessary to decentralize and broadly apply the approach to workforce planning. To accomplish this, Pennsylvania developed a workforce and succession planning Web site that contains tools for supervisors to easily follow and use, enabling workforce planning to be performed within agencies by frontline supervisors.

Further Refinement to Workforce Planning Model to Include Development of Succession Planning Model

In 2001, additional refinements were made to the existing seven-phase model. A team of Pennsylvania management associates researched workforce and succession planning strategies in the public and private sector. Results of this nine-month project yielded a framework for agencies to use in developing workforce and succession plans. Visit the Web site — www.workforceplanning.state.pa.us — for more information.

Development of Nursing Recruitment Web Site

In 2001, a Web site and other recruitment materials were developed for the purpose of attracting nurses to Pennsylvania state government. Like many other states, Pennsylvania is also faced with the daunting challenge of recruiting and retaining nurses given the current and widespread shortage in the healthcare profession.

Responsibility for ongoing maintenance and updating of this site rests with the State Civil Service Commission.

Development of Retirement Projection Tool

In August 2002, agencies were provided with a Workforce Planning Retirement Projection Tool. This Microsoft Access application allowed agency human resource and budget staff to assist program managers in identifying those currently eligible to retire and forecasting potential turnover within the next four years based on a normal retirement age of 60 with 35 years of service. To encourage use and to gain a statewide workforce perspective, agencies were requested and later mandated by the Governor's Office of Administration to utilize this tool and complete an annual Workforce Reporting Survey to identify the classifications that are expected to experience critical rates of turnover within the next four years. While Office of Administration workforce planners can generate enterprise-wide statistics, the agencies are in the best position to interpret agency-specific data and highlight critical areas of need.

Reports from the Governor's Office of Administration and the 2002 agency surveys revealed some startling results. Office of Administration reports showed that over 4,300 (6.5 percent) of state employees with 35 years of service or age 60 were eligible to retire as of February 2003. In addition, the survey identified over 30 job classes that could experience 100 percent turnover within the next five years, and an additional 10 job class series with a potential for a 50 percent or greater turnover within the next five years. These and other specific results were analyzed by workforce planners and presented to the State Civil Service Commission and Office of Administration Classification and Pay staff to determine areas to be addressed for recruitment and retention planning, testing procedures, job qualifications and training needs.

Development of Integrated Computerized Examination (ICE) System

In response to requests for a more streamlined approach to the manner in which applicants are tested for state government employment, in 2002 the State Civil Service Commission began implementing ICE to facilitate online applications and electronic civil service examinations. This initiative has greatly reduced the amount of time between candidate application and examination, as well as between the examination and being placed on a Civil Service list. These improvements are a great benefit in expediting the recruitment and hiring process to quickly fill positions left vacant by retirements.

Establishment of Bureau of Workforce Planning and Development Governor's Office of Administration

In January 2004, the Bureau of Workforce Planning and Development was created in response to the envisioned, ongoing criticality of workforce and succession planning in the Commonwealth. The Bureau consists of two divisions — Human Resource Development and Workforce Planning and Performance. Dedicated resources have been established for the purpose of planning and addressing current and projected workforce needs pertaining to recruitment, placement, testing, organizational design,

job readiness, and human resource development. For more information on the Bureau, reference the following Web site: www.hrm.state.pa.us/wpd. Employees in this Bureau assist individual agencies in designing strategies for acquiring funding for additional positions; implementing supplemental workforce programs like new low-cost internship programs; expanding succession planning and mentoring pilots; networking with other jurisdictions, local businesses, higher education institutions, associations, and experts to discuss and address workforce planning issues and solutions; and developing internal programs for enhancing employee skills and addressing work-life events to assist in improving employee performance and retention.

Future Workforce Planning Initiatives

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's workforce planning efforts currently center on projects that impact information technology professionals, nurses, parole agents and human resource professionals. A number of automated tools and other resources have been developed and deployed to state agencies to assist them in their workforce planning activities. To further define Pennsylvania's workforce planning initiatives, future short- and long-term workforce planning strategies are outlined as following:

Short-Term Strategies

1. Conduct workforce analysis and planning at the enterprise level, identifying high-risk occupations and classifications.
2. Provide direction, consultation, technical assistance and additional tools to agencies to conduct workforce analysis and planning at the agency level.
3. Provide consultation to agencies regarding opportunities for structural consolidations and re-classification or for abolishing positions at the agency level.
4. Plan for accelerated and targeted recruitment, testing and selection in coordination with the State Civil Service Commission and the Governor's Office of Administration's Bureau of State Employment.
5. Provide enterprise direction and coordination, including block hiring for jobs that are utilized by more than one agency.
6. Plan for accelerated orientation and training for new employees.
7. Collaborate with the State Employees' Retirement System and to the extent possible encourage employees to provide advance notification of retirement.

Long-Term Strategies

1. Formulate a workforce planning advisory group consisting of local businesses and higher education institutions to address workforce planning issues and solutions.
2. Explore the creative use of retirees as a viable resource of experienced talent for temporarily filling critical positions.

3. Develop a management academy to include technical and managerial skills necessary to be successful leaders.
4. Develop a system to capture the reasons why employees enter state government, transfer within state government, or exit state government.
5. Further assess the manner in which the Commonwealth captures institutional knowledge at an enterprise level.
6. Establish a consortium among contiguous states in the northeast region of the U.S. to discuss and solve workforce planning issues.

Workforce Planning Lessons Learned

Throughout the eight years that Pennsylvania has been more recently engaged in workforce planning efforts on an enterprise level, much valuable experience has been gained, and several important lessons, including the following, have been learned:

When taking into consideration the day-to-day operations of managing a human resource office within the Commonwealth, workforce and succession planning efforts may not appear to be an immediate issue of focused attention. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes that a more concerted effort should have been taken to request from agencies their workforce and succession planning efforts.

Costs are associated with workforce planning and succession planning efforts. Enhanced planning for anticipated vacancies should have occurred earlier in the process. This would have allowed for more efficient mentoring and knowledge transfer prior to staff departures.

Legislative constraints exist for the utilization of retirees as a viable pool of candidates for re-employment. Limited knowledge of Internal Revenue Service rules pertaining to the rehiring of annuitants also existed.

Conclusion

Pennsylvania's workforce and succession planning initiatives are designed to maintain a workforce capable of meeting the evolving operational and staffing needs of the Commonwealth. This approach recognizes and requires focused resources for critical areas, top-level endorsement and collaborative efforts among stakeholders for effective decision-making, broad application and technological utilization for the implementation of reliable workforce plans. To date, efforts have focused on maintaining customer service and have resulted in measurable steps to avert operational disruptions. By planning, strategizing and implementing successful corrective and preventive actions, the Commonwealth's workforce planning initiatives directly and indirectly benefit its citizens and customers by endeavoring to continue and improve services that enhance the quality of life for those served.

*"Workforce planning is the most critical human resource management challenge in the public sector today.... To make workforce planning succeed, HR professionals will be called upon to master new roles as leaders, business partners, and change agents."*⁷

Notes

- ¹ International Personnel Management Association. (2002). "Workforce Planning Resource Guide for Public Sector Human Resource Professionals."
- ² Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2004). Workforce Planning Internet Address: www.workforce-planning.state.pa.us.
- ³ Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. (2004). "Governor's Annual Work Force Report."
- ⁴ Dychtwald, Ken; Tamara Erickson; and Bob Morison. (2004). "It's Time to Retire Retirement." *Harvard Business Review*.
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